DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 111 SP 035 488

AUTHOR Faire, Mary
TITLE Helping Professionals Take Control of Assessment: An Exploratory Study of Recording and Reporting Achievement in New Zealand Schools.
PUB DATE Jul 94
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (24th, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, July 5, 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Records; *Achievement Rating; *Compliance (Legal); Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Inservice Teacher Education; *National Curriculum; Postsecondary Education; Professional Development; *Report Cards; Student Evaluation; Student Records
IDENTIFIERS *National Qualifications Framework (New Zealand)

ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' recording and reporting practices in conjunction with the recently published New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF), which requires teachers to report the achievement of students in curriculum strands. Teachers from 10 primary, intermediate, and secondary schools examined existing practices and worked to develop innovative approaches consistent with the NZCF. Findings revealed a trend for schools to be individual in designing new methods for recording and reporting. While it was feasible for schools in some geographical areas to coordinate their recording and reporting practices, for others it was not. Success in achieving consistency with the NZCF was dependent upon the involvement and leadership of the school principal or curriculum leader; teachers' knowledge of the new curricula; and available resources of time, finances, and personnel. There was a great deal of effort devoted to involving students in the recording process, to enhance student motivation and learning. There was widespread criticism of the national system for recording achievement in primary schools. Teacher development was a major outcome of the study, as teachers were researchers in the project and "owned" the changes that took place and because the study provided professional development opportunities. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Helping professionals take control of assessment: an exploratory study of recording and reporting achievement in New Zealand schools[1]

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
MARY F. FAIRE
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Mary Faire

School of Education, University of Waikato, N.Z.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 375 111

Abstract

This paper outlines a recently completed study of the recording and reporting practices of some New Zealand teachers. Due to the recent publication of a new national curriculum framework and associated national curriculum statements, teachers in New Zealand have been confronted with a need to modify their systems for recording and reporting achievement. The study reported in this paper described current practices and monitored the development of procedures consistent with the new curriculum. The findings revealed a trend for schools to be individual in designing new methods for recording and reporting, a tendency for systems to concentrate on skill development and widespread criticism of the current national system for recording achievement in primary schools. Although the project was funded as an exploratory research study, professional development was a major outcome. This was largely due to the way the information was shared and the collaborative approach taken by primary and secondary schools in one of the two areas.

Introduction

In 1993 the Ministry of Education in New Zealand published the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF). This document and the associated national guidelines for each curriculum area (currently Mathematics and Science have been finalised and English and Technology are in draft form) set out new guidelines for what should be taught in each curriculum area in strands. The strands delineate the major areas of content within each curriculum. Within each strand, achievement objectives are stated at each of eight achievement levels, spanning the thirteen years of primary and secondary schooling. The National Administration Guidelines (1993) require that Boards of Trustees[2]

---

1 Paper presented at ATEA Conference, Brisbane, July 1994.

2 Boards of Trustees are responsible for the governance of New Zealand schools. Each school community elects its own Board of Trustees every three years.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP 35488

'...must foster student achievement by providing a balanced curriculum in accordance with the national curriculum statements...each Board, through the Principal and staff, will be required to: (among other things)

ii monitor student progress against the national achievement objectives;and...

v assess student achievement, maintain individual records and report on student progress' (p. 4).

The effect of this legislation is that teachers are now required to record and report the achievement of students consistently with the content of each of the new curriculum documents in strands and levels of achievement. The national record cards, however, which were developed and implemented over the last ten years, are not complimentary to the new curriculum initiatives. The exploratory study outlined in this paper was initiated and funded by the Ministry of Education in 1993/94 to investigate how schools currently carry out recording and reporting functions, the extent to which different levels of schooling within a geographical area are able to co-ordinate their approaches, the consistency of these approaches with the New Zealand Curriculum Framework and the extent to which students are involved in evaluating their own achievement.

Description of the exploratory study

The study took place with the assistance of ten primary, intermediate and secondary schools. In each of Hamilton and Rotorua[3] five schools were invited to take part in the study due to their geographical proximity to each other. The five schools in each city (three primary schools, one intermediate and one high school) formed a cluster for the purposes of this study. In Rotorua, the three primary schools contributed almost all of their students to the intermediate which, in turn, contributed the majority of its students to the co-educational high school in the cluster. In contrast, the students from two of the Hamilton primary schools mostly went on to the intermediate while the third was a full primary school[4]. A few of the students left this primary school to attend the intermediate in the cluster in form one and two[5]. The secondary school in Hamilton was a single sex school and, therefore, received some of the students from both the intermediate and the full primary school.

Other than teachers in the schools, the main personnel involved in the study were a researcher and two facilitators. The facilitators held cluster meetings in each city and

---

3 Two provincial cities in the central North Island.

4 Contributing primary schools provide the first 6 years of schooling, while full primary schools provide the first 8 years.

5 Form one and two are years 7 and 8 of schooling.

encouraged the teachers involved to share their existing recording and reporting practices. As well, the facilitators worked with teachers and principals in each of the schools to assist them to reflect on existing practices and develop innovative approaches, consistent with the NZCF. They organised appropriate guest speakers for the cluster meetings and shared, with the researcher, the responsibility for planning the direction of the study. The researcher observed, recorded in note form and audio taped the cluster meetings, and with the help of the facilitators, analysed the results for trends and issues. She was also primarily responsible for the production of the final report.

The study was carried out in three phases. In phase one, data was collected about existing practices in each of the schools and the usefulness of the information transferred about students between the schools. Phase two involved the facilitators in assisting teachers from the five schools in their cluster to reflect upon their existing practices and to develop innovative ways to enhance learning through recording and reporting. It culminated in a cluster meeting at which progress on goals was shared and guest speakers were invited to share their perspectives' on different aspects of the recording and reporting area. Phase three saw a continuation of the process carried out in phase two, but concluded with a meeting at which the teachers from each cluster shared the results of their development work over the preceding two terms.

Results

Results of this study suggested that the official primary school record cards have been superseded by the new curriculum statements and the NZCF. Teachers reported that the information on these cards did not lead to the enhancement of learning throughout schooling. On the contrary, intermediate and secondary schools found the information too general to be helpful and the format of the cards impractical for communication to single subject teachers. For these reasons, among others, new cards were designed by teachers in the study to enhance communication between different levels of schooling and the final report recommended a new set of national school record cards be developed.

Other results revealed that, while it is feasible for schools in some geographical areas to co-ordinate their recording and reporting practices, for others it is not. The reasons for this variation related to the type of secondary school involved, the climate of co-operation between the schools in an area, and the role played by an 'outside' facilitator in this process.

All schools in the study were anxious to ensure their recording and reporting practices were consistent with the NZCF and associated curriculum statements. However, the extent to which they were able to achieve this seemed to be dependent upon the

involvement and leadership of the school principal or curriculum leader, the knowledge the teachers had about the new curricula, and the resources, in terms of time, finance and personnel, that were available.

There was a great deal of effort devoted to implementing approaches to teaching and learning that involved the students as central to the recording and reporting process. Teachers in both clusters were of the opinion that student motivation and learning were enhanced when students took more control of this process.

In Rotorua, a major thrust of the study was to develop an approach to recording and reporting consistent with teaching and learning in the bilingual and immersion in Maaori units in each of the schools. As a result, a model - Te Pukenga Tuatahi - was developed and is being trialed and revised throughout the rest of 1994 by the teachers participating in the Te Reo Maaori in the Curriculum contract running in the Bay of Plenty area.

Finally, the use of information technology in the area of recording and reporting was explored to some extent. Although a thorough investigation was beyond the scope of the study, recommendations were included in the final report for further investigation of the feasibility and use of technology for the transfer, storage, analysis and presentation of records of students' achievements.

Discussion

Since the education reforms overhauled the education system in New Zealand in 1989, teacher in-service education in New Zealand has become mainly the responsibility of each individual school. The advisory service still exists in a modified form to assist and support schools with professional development and curriculum implementation, but the Ministry of Education also lets contracts for both curriculum and teacher development to compliment the schools' own professional development programmes.

The exploratory study described above was carried out under contract to the Ministry of Education as part of their curriculum development initiatives. Due to the major curriculum reforms taking place, the Ministry needed information about the current situation in schools with respect to recording assessment information and reporting this to all sections of the community. As well, Ministry officials saw the exploratory study as an opportunity to encourage teachers to investigate innovative ways of recording and reporting achievement, especially pupil self-assessment and Records of Achievement for school leaver documentation at the senior secondary school level. Although teacher development was not a major purpose for this contract, it was a major outcome.

At least three reasons were evident as to why teacher development emerged as a major outcome of what was essentially an action research project. Firstly, the fact that the teachers were actively involved as researchers in the project and encouraged to take control of the development of new resources themselves meant that they owned the changes that took place. This appeared to motivate the teachers involved as did the sharing sessions at the cluster meetings which provided a forum for comparing and contrasting each school's progress.

The role of the facilitator also emerged as an important factor in this process. Both facilitators in this study were invited by schools in the study to assist them in their development. To a great extent this consisted of having someone from outside the school to listen and react to the school's suggested approach. These 'outside' facilitators were informed about current developments in the area and had experience of a variety of school systems at a range of levels of schooling. Both facilitators were able to raise issues for schools to consider, often slowing down the development in the process. Teachers from the schools in which this happened commented at the meetings that, rather than a draw back, this chance for reflection and consideration of an issue usually resulted in better solutions to their problems.

Finally, resources were identified as an important aspect in being able to undertake professional development to the extent necessary to produce useful, accepted systems of recording and reporting. Each of the schools was able to claim up to ten teacher release days from the contract to afford staff time to work on these developments. Many of the schools involved used at least an equal amount of their own funds to release teachers for these purposes as well. The point was made at the final cluster meetings that with all the curriculum developments occurring at present, it was expensive for schools to provide the amount of professional development necessary for worthwhile implementation and that they appreciated the funding that the study had provided for this purpose.

The issue of ownership referred to above, in terms of teachers having control of their own professional development, also occurred in terms of purpose of this project. That is, the process of the exploratory study enabled the teachers involved to gain some control of recording and reporting systems. As stated above in the results' section, the official primary school record cards received less than positive feedback, particularly from the secondary and intermediate teachers, whom the cards were designed to inform. Moreover, teachers at all levels reported that these cards were not consistent with the new curriculum documents or the requirements of the National Administration Guidelines they were required to implement. The exploratory study gave these teachers license to explore

new ways and modify existing practices for recording assessment results and findings and report these to parents and caregivers.

In the earlier stages of the project, the teachers were hesitant to reject the official record cards completely. One school still believed that these cards were relevant and only after the second cluster meeting admitted that perhaps times had changed. Even later in the project, after new cards and systems consistent with the new curricula had been designed, schools still needed reassurance that they could stop using the out-dated cards and trial their new prototypes. Encouraged by the facilitators and a ministry official who attended a cluster meeting, the teachers in the Rotorua group wrote to the Ministry of Education in Wellington to ask officially to trial their new system. They received support from this source and are at present trying out their new approach.

The involvement of the principals from most of the schools in the Rotorua cluster influenced the extent to which the teachers in this cluster took control. Four of the five [6] principals in this cluster attended all of the meetings and actively promoted and encouraged their teachers to design more effective recording and reporting systems. This involvement assured teachers that their ideas were worthwhile and would be implemented. The cluster approach provided a forum in which the principals worked together alongside their teachers to achieve a system that would work between schools at all levels for the benefit of children's learning. In contrast, only one principal remained fully involved in the Hamilton cluster. The results in this cluster reflected this limited involvement. Although a revised high school entrant profile sheet was designed, no other inter-school initiatives were taken and developments within these schools were mostly at a classroom level[7]. The trend was also for more school-wide development in the schools who had the full involvement of their principal.

As already reported, teachers were very critical of the existing primary school record cards. Because the national curriculum documents spell out achievement for each subjects throughout schooling and each of the levels of achievement, a school-based approach to recording and reporting was recommended for internal school use. However, in terms of the information that must be communicated to each student's new school at transfer, an individual school-approach posed difficulties for teachers in large secondary and intermediate schools where there might be anything up to 60 contributing

---

6 The high school in Rotorua was represented by the deputy principal, who, in this very large school had overall responsibility for curriculum leadership. To all intents and purposes she was the 'principal' in this matter.

7 The exceptions to this were the school in which the principal did take a leading role and one other in which the deputy principal took responsibility for designing a new school-wide approach to recording and reporting.

schools. Therefore, the research team in the study reported here, recommended that a common set of cards be designed for the transfer of achievement information throughout the thirteen years of schooling.

Some examples of the sort of cards that could perform this function were collected during the study. Although these contained space to record achievement information about the essential learning ares (i.e., the content) and the essential skills, the vital area of attitudes and values was omitted in every case. This led the research team to look closely at the type of information being collected about children's learning in schools within and outside of the project. Our observations suggested that the trend is towards collecting vast amounts of information about knowledge, understanding and skills without due attention to the attitudes and values that underlie, motivate and influence such learning. One possible reason for this focus on knowledge and skills could be the accountability movement in education. Although an international issue, in New Zealand a system of school effectiveness reviews serves to monitor achievement standards. The results of these reviews can be published, leading to schools investing a great amount of time and energy in collecting and aggregating assessment information. Information about knowledge and skills can often be collected more easily and, supposedly, more objectively (for example from test[8] results and performance tasks) than attitudes and values. However, we ignore attitudes and values at our peril and, in some ways, the very instruments used can lead to a deterioration in attitudes to learning.

References

Department of Education (1989). *Keeping School Records: Primary Progress Records.* Wellington: Government Printer.

Education Gazette (1993). *The National Administration Guidelines.* April issue.

Faire, M. (1994). *Recording and Reporting: An Exploratory Study.* An exploratory study carried out under contract to the Ministry of Education. Hamilton: University of Waikato.

Ministry of Education (1993). *New Zealand Curriculum Framework..* Wellington: Learning Media.

---

8 'Test' is used here in its widest sense to encompass such instruments as reading running records, mathematics checkpoints and the results of the diagnostic survey in reading and writing at age 6.